

#PassMIGoodTime

REPEAL TRUTH - IN - SENTENCING

OCTOBER 2019 | @PRISONERLED | ISSUE 1

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH

Rally for Lifer, Law, Prison and Criminal Justice Reform..... Thursday, October 10
Motivate Michigan Monthly phone call..... Thursday, October 17
Reedeeming Kimberly's Returning Citizen's Resource Fair..... Saturday, October 19
Monthly Criminal Justice Reform Forum Meeting Tuesday, October 29

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MAPS Bending Michigan's Abolitionists Into Shape

by Amani Sawari | August 26, 2019 | www.sawarimi.org



robust opportunity for Michigan based and regionally aligned organizers to connect and focus on ending mass incarceration and abolition in Michigan.

Participation from Across the Nation

MAPS organizers did a fantastic job executing their Bend the Bars conference. Topics of discussions ranged from addressing family specific issues to developing abolitionist media makers. Panel discussions included heavy hitting activists like Wisconsin's Ben Turk who coordinated the 2016 National Prison Strikes as well as formally incarcerated game changers like Willis-X who wrote several very popular statewide newsletters (Spectator, Michigan Lifers Report and Cure Lifelong) from behind the wall. Panelists also included prolific research writer Dennis Boatwright, founder of Scholars Behind Bars and Harold Hadley, who'd assisted in coordinating the Kinross Uprising and had been released less than a week prior to the conference date. Bend the Bars was a free, public event open to activists from all ends of the spectrum, but MAPS was able to make the conference inclusive while still making sure that it felt safe for abolitionists to share their ideas and network among one other.

Centering Incarcerated Voices

Most significantly, MAPS centered the voices of incarcerated folks and their families in creative ways throughout the event with the use of scheduled telephone calls and transcribed letters, one letter from Randal LaFevre shared, "With 2.3 million citizens behind bars, and a hearty church of each state budget going to the Department of Corrections, America realizes that mass incarceration is no longer financially feasible just as chattel slavery was no longer financially feasible in 1865". Many reformists fail to consult prisoners in their process, but as abolitionists its critical that we center their experiences. Financial limitations have pushed conservatives to the edge that liberals and radicals have been

There are many critical aspects of Michigan's department of corrections that are in need of reform. There are tens of thousands of people that suffer from the plethora of issues including prisoners themselves as well as their families and allies. While there are many people who recognize these issues, there aren't many spaces to come together and discuss potential solutions and strategize towards the implementation of those solutions. The weekend of August 23rd and 24th the Michigan Abolition and Prisoner Solidarity (MAPS) group hosted their annual, Bend the Bars conference in order to create that space. Attendees included local organizers as well as groups from across the country including Kansas City IWOC, Milwaukee IWOC, Fight Toxic Prisons and the NYC Black Panther Party. The event was a

teetering on for decades. Now everyone has an ear to hear out different solutions to the problem that tough-on-crime politicians created. The presentations rather than being lecture heavy were more conversational. There were moments when presenters posed questions to audience members that went on to take over the discussion. Conferences like these, focused on abolition, prisoner advocacy and ending mass incarceration, are essential for us to have all around the country throughout the year so that we can share ideas give each other updates on local movements while strategizing together towards better solutions.

There are dozens of organizations focused on a large variety of criminal justice related issues all across the state ranging from prison conditions to sentencing and reforms. Another incarcerated participant voiced some of the may concerns that are engrossing Michigan's prisons, "MDOC food service is still serving poor quality food with very small portions of food, prisoners are still being abused daily in segregation, officers are abusing the power with these tasers they are now allowed to carry in prison, and not alot of programs in prion to get a prisoner prepared to leave prison to return back to society with computer skills etc... Prisoners are nothing but a big warehouse where society hides its own mistakes! And a big business! MDOC really does not rehabilitate a prisoner; if a prisoner does not take the initiative to rehabilitate themselves by reflecting on their past mistakes in life, reading all and any improvement books, studying, etc... then it will not get done". Prisoners have taken it upon themselves to seek solutions to these many problems but they cannot do it alone. It can be difficult to know where to start and how to appropriate resources in order to be most effective.

The conference highlighted the fact that it's helpful to look towards prisoners themselves for guidance. Rand Gould, a prisoner currently being housed at Central Michigan Correctional Facility, identified some key issues that supporters should focus on in the fight dismantle the oppressive conditions of Michigans prisons. Gould's points were targeted at increasing departments transparency and reforming over punitive sentences. The lack of transparency in MDOC, and corrections departments nationwide, allow for the consistent abuse of its residents without any accountability. To address this Gould calls for the introduction of bills that would give the Legislative Corrections Ombudsman (LCO) active oversight of MDOC with the authority to enforce rules in partnership with the state's attorney general. The current lack of authoritative oversight has opened the door for extreme abuses that have expanded from case-by-case individual incidents of abuse to entire populations being grossly mismanaged by officials. For example, Gould identified MDOC cattlebarns, "originally opened as 'Temporary Facilities' three decades ago, promptly made permanent and double bunked, which should be condemned, with leaking roofs, black mold infested ceilings, crumbling foundations, ad nauseam" that house thousands of Michigan's inmates in decrepit, overcrowded conditions.

Another significant element of Gould's suggestions to Michigan's activists were related to sentencing. Michigan's prisoners on average serve 140% of their sentence in comparison to individuals with identical crimes in other states. This drastic case of over sentencing is a result of mandatory minimums, indeterminate sentences and heavy restrictions on disciplinary credit earnings. In order to address this Gould included the potential of the restoration of good time credits to allow prisoners to earn time off of their sentences, incentivizing good behavior. Along with this there is also a call for eliminating the sentence of life without parole, placing a cap on life sentences and giving every person the opportunity to be reviewed the parole board for release.



Left to Right: Dennis Boarwright, Willis X, Kevin (NY BPP), Amani Sawari and Brianna (Kansas City IWOC)

Many of Michigan's prisoners, including those sentenced as juveniles, that are serving long indeterminate sentences that span decades. Many of those people have minimums greater than twenty years where they're unable to demonstrate their development to the parole board until they reach that minimum. Gould proposes a system that would allow for these prisoners to meet with the parole board after serving a minimum of ten years, to be reviewed every five years for a possibility of release. These are the changes that have been identified by a person who is directly impacted by this system that could transform Michigan's corrections department. Directing our resources to calls that are anything less than these would be wasteful and misguided.—

DEMANDING CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

STATE CAPITAL RALLY

Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 11:00a
Contact: (313) 518-7876

ORGANIZED BY MICHIGAN'S NATIONAL LIFER'S ASSOCIATION

PARTNERS
The Sentencing Project, JustLeadershipUSA, ACLU, Justus Now, COPI, Michigan Liberation, and more..



REDEEMING KIMBERLY'S RETURNING CITIZEN RESOURCE FAIR

REDEEMING KIMBERLY IS PLEASED TO INVITE YOU TO OUR FAMILY-FRIENDLY RESOURCE FAIR FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITY RESOURCES FROM SADO, RECOVERY PARK, BAGS TO BUTTERFLIES, CHANCE FOR LIFE, MICHIGAN LIBERATION, SECOND CHANCE HOUSING SOLUTIONS, LUCK INC., FOR OUR FUTURE, EXPUNGEMENT RESOURCES, AND MANY MORE!

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HOSTING A RESOURCE TABLE, CONTACT
REDEEMINGKIMBERLY5317@GMAIL.COM
(313) 957-1410

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2019
6:00 – 9:00 PM
CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH
231 E GRAND BLVD
DETROIT, MI 48207



Monday, October 7, 2019



Lenore Anderson
President, Alliance for
Safety & Justice



David Guenther
Senior Strategist, Mackinac
Center for Public Policy



JT Weis
CEO
Abcor Industries

Topic: "Criminal Justice Reform in Michigan: Why it Should be a Priority for the Business Community"

The outdated political mantra of being "tough on crime" did not provide the intended public safety return. Instead, it had the unintended consequence of being "tough on taxpayers." Worse though, these policies have been devastating for individuals, families and communities.

Smart Criminal Justice reform should seek to improve public safety, allow for redemption, and return those who have served their time to gainful and fulfilling work. Employers not only have the opportunity to find dedicated employees, but individuals who find success upon return are twice as likely to stay crime-free which makes all our communities safer.

This discussion will open with comments from Doug DeVos, Co-Chairman, Amway, moderated by Andy Johnston, Vice President of Public Policy at the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, and will feature national insights, local case studies and research, an overview of where Michigan stands today and a focus on opportunities that can advance the state's reform efforts further.

MEETING DETAILS: TO REGISTER:

International Ballroom
JW Marriott
Open Seating

Click on Club website:
<http://www.econclub.net/>

TIME:

Luncheon begins: 12 noon
Adjournment: 1:30pm

PRICING:

\$35 members
\$45 guests

BUSINESS CASUAL ATTIRE
WELCOMED

Michigan: The Good Time Bill myth

Rand W. Gould | September 17, 2019 | Gus Harrison CF

Good time credits, Proposal B, disciplinary credits and Truth-in-Sentencing in Michigan prisons

Ever since Michigan prisoners finally figured out that Truth-In-Sentencing (TIS) was not so truthful and, in reality, was enacted as "disciplinary time," which meant those sentenced for crimes committed after Dec. 15, 1998, would serve their entire minimum before becoming eligible for a shot at parole, rumors have circulated among them that a new "good time" law was going to be passed by the state legislature. It never happened. The good time bill passing is a myth. Get over it!

Y'all ain't gettin' no good time no time soon and here's why: Proposal B, which is what is known as a citizen initiated law or ballot proposal, was passed by a majority vote of Michigan citizens way back in 1978 to eliminate good time for a whole laundry list of crimes. See Pub. Act, 1953, No. 232, Ch. III, §33b, as added by Initiated Law, Proposal B, eff. Dec. 12, 1978; as currently encoded in MCL 791.233b; and MCL 800.33; see also MCL 800.34; and MCL 800.35. The problem with passed ballot proposals, like Proposal B, is they can only be repealed by a three-fourths majority vote in both the state House and Senate. See Mich. Const. 1963, art. 2, §9, ¶15.

Both good time bills currently pending in the Michigan legislature – HB 5666 and SB 1143, in the House and Senate, respectively – went straight to committee and still sit there. Both would, if passed, restore good time credits to most prisoners by repealing and rewriting previous law regarding good time credits, Proposal B, disciplinary credits and "disciplinary time" (TIS).

Both, on the surface, seem to be good bills. However, both bite off way more than they can chew and, as written, require a three-fourths majority vote in the House and Senate to pass – something virtually impossible to achieve given the legislature's current membership. One can only wonder why state legislators even bothered to introduce these dead-on-arrival-because-of-Proposal-B bills. A good subject, in and of itself, for a writer with a far greater research capability than this one.

If Michigan state legislators really want to pass a bill that effectively reduces the current population inside jam-packed state prisons (TIS), they should introduce a bill, or bills, that simply repeals disciplinary time, as enacted back in 1998. See 1998 MI PA 316, eff. Dec. 15, 1998. This could be done with a simple majority vote in the House and Senate and would allow all Michigan prisoners not subject to enhanced, flat-time sentences to earn five days disciplinary credits per month, along with the possibility of earning two special disciplinary credits per month.

Moreover, prisoners whose crimes are not listed as Proposal B crimes would be able to accrue good time credits as well. All of which would go a long way in reducing Michigan's exorbitantly expensive, overcrowded, execrable and inhumane prison system. —

Send our brother some love and light: Rand W. Gould, C-187131, Harrison Correctional Facility, 2727 E. Beecher Rd., Adrian, MI 49221, www.freerandgould.com.

Sawari Mi
P.O. Box #2278
Detroit, MI 48202

These are the NATIONAL DEMANDS of the men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons:

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.

2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.

3. Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.

4. Rescission of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.

5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.

6. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.

7. No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.

8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.

9. Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories

10. Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called "ex-felons." Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!